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**“WHITHER SOCIALISM?—
VALUES IN A CHANGING CIVILISATION”**

Rt. Hon. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P.

**DEMOCRATIC
VALUES**

**FIRST IN THE SERIES OF
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LECTURES, 1950**

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DEMOCRATIC VALUES

Rt. Hon. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P.

INTRODUCTION

by MARGARET COLE, Hon. Secretary of the Fabian Society

IT gives me particular pleasure to introduce the Minister of Health. I hope he will not mind my recalling that he was once my pupil. It was a long time ago; it was at Oxford in the 'twenties that Aneurin Bevan and a friend of his came to a Summer School to be instructed by a very new and trembling tutor on the subject of Local Government. When I say I was Aneurin Bevan's teacher and he was my pupil, all I have to add is, on one or two occasions in the course of our sessions, I interjected the word, "But . . .!" That is by way of a private introduction which I hope you will not mind.

For the rest, I think we are all extremely proud and happy to have as an Autumn Lecturer, Aneurin Bevan, who has been one of the most prominent and most vigorous members of the Labour administration since 1945. When I went round in 1949 touring the United States and lecturing to people of all kinds, university students, social workers, Christian churches, and so forth, almost the only kind of personal question I was asked was: "What sort of person is Aneurin Bevan? Is he going to pull the world down, or is he going to re-make it?" Perhaps to-night, as he has got a very wide subject indeed, "Democratic Values," he will tell us whether in his view democratic values mean that you shall pull down the world—or re-make it.

It is the first time, I think, that Aneurin Bevan has taken part in Fabian lectures. Before I call upon him, I want just to take a minute and a half more to tell you why I think this is a particularly important occasion. The Fabian lectures, of course, are a very ancient phenomenon, a very ancient institution. They have been going on now for sixty years, and one of the first series of Fabian lectures was held in 1888. It was addressed by Bernard Shaw, by Sidney Webb, by Graham Wallas, and by four other distinguished persons. It produced Fabian Essays which some of you may have read—and all of you ought to have read it because Fabian Essays, which was first delivered as quite a private, gentle

and not very exciting series of lectures in the autumn of 1888, was afterwards published as a book, in 1889. I think it may fairly claim to be one of the books which has most influenced the policy of the Labour Party, and therefore the work of the Labour Government, during these past few years.

I speak as Honorary Secretary of the Fabian Society, and I think that, though the Fabian Society is very, very old—older than I am myself and older than most of you here—yet I think that, old as it is, it has a most important function at the present time, and indeed in the future, because the Fabian Society is almost a unique object. It is a society of socialists, of independent socialists, which nevertheless is tied closely and firmly to the great organised working-class movements, the trade unions and the Labour Party. Therefore the Fabian Society, as we have said time and time again, has no policy, it has no group of dogmas which it tries to force upon the Party, to force upon the trade unions, to get over by snap votes at snap meetings. All it does is to work and discuss and put forward suggestions, for the trade unions and for the movement and for the Labour Party, which can be seriously and patiently discussed: and it can put these forward in a very favourable way because it is not an official body. Anything that the Fabian Society suggests, whether in a pamphlet, in a report, or in a lecture, is simply the opinions and views of the individual Fabian writer or the Fabian Group, the Fabian Executive or the Fabian lecturer. Whatever appears in print is not in any way an official document; it does not commit either the Labour Party or the Labour movement; and I am sure that Mr. Bevan, who is going to talk to us to-night, realises the importance of having a society which can put forward suggestions in a democratic movement which are open to discussion and which are not set out as dogma, or intended to commit anyone.

What I think we need, what I am sure we all need at the present time, is a certain amount of re-thinking of our democratic position, our democratic socialist position, and of our democratic socialist policies. The Fabian Society is trying at this moment, through a series of discussions, to work out anew what should be the policy, the thought and the philosophy for the new generation. If we can work this out we will put it before the movement as a whole, as something to be discussed. At the moment what we are doing is asking our audiences in this series of lectures, which is called "Values in a Changing Civilisation," and which is being opened by Aneurin Bevan, to listen, to criticise, and to go home and think it over. We are giving six chosen people our platform so that they can state what their view is of those values. Out of that we hope eventually will arise something which will revitalise Socialism in this country and for the world for the next fifty years.

DEMOCRATIC VALUES

The transcript of an unscripted lecture, delivered at Livingstone Hall, S.W.1, on 13th October, 1950.

IT may be the first time that I have spoken in one of these series, but it is certainly not the first time that I have heard a Fabian lecture. The one I did hear was by a person so eminent, but it was so badly delivered, that, whereas I felt rather timid at first, I was reassured when I reflected upon it. It was delivered by Sidney Webb, and George Bernard Shaw was the Chairman. George Bernard Shaw was perfectly audible, if somewhat inconsequential. Sidney Webb talked into his beard for an hour and a quarter. But Bernard Shaw consoled us afterwards by saying that it did not matter very much whether we had really heard what Sidney Webb had said, because it was on sale outside as we were going away!

That, I understand, is a Fabian tradition. On this occasion, however, I hope I will be audible; maybe I will be inconsequential; but I will not be on sale outside. The reason is that I have not written it out yet.

I, however, would like to start by putting myself—as far as I can—on good terms with the Press. This is not a Government statement; the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility does not extend to what I am going to say this evening; I have not consulted the Prime Minister about it; it is entirely my own; and it is not a statement of final opinions, but, as the Chairman said, a series of suggestions, gropings, reflections and speculations upon a subject which is so wide that very many lectures could be made upon it without exhausting it. I hope, therefore, that what our good friends of the Press will print tomorrow will be as tentative as what I am going to say this evening—though I am afraid I have not got very much hope at all of it.



The first thing that we have to remember about democracy—it is an obvious thing to say but it is very necessary to remind ourselves of it—is that it is very young. I remember years ago I was listening to a lecture given by a very eminent person who was describing Athenian democracy. I was very young, but fortunately there was a library in my home town and I had read about Athens; and after he had spent about an hour discoursing on the merits

of Athenian democracy, I reminded him that there were about 340,000 slaves and about 67,000 freemen. But the dons are so accustomed to talking about Plato, and so accustomed to talking about democratic speculations of 2,000 or 3,000 years ago, that they have forgotten that democracy only arrived about 25 years ago.

Therefore the first thing to remember about it is that it is exceedingly young. Indeed, the universal franchise arrived in my own adult life; and there are even some nations in the world today, who call themselves democratic, where women have not got the parliamentary vote. So it is very necessary, if we are to maintain a buoyant and optimistic spirit against the vicissitudes of the times, that we always keep in mind that ordinary men and women have only worn the purple for a very short time. In fact, democracy as we know it today is a product of the twentieth century, although, as I said before, it was preceded by many philosophical speculations as to its merits or demerits; but as a living institution, as a political and social fact, it has only just arrived. It is necessary for us to keep this in mind, because there are a good many people who speak about it and think about it as though it is so ancient that it is tottering on its last legs, and that it ought to give way to something more novel, and something more experimental, and something they call more adventurous. This was particularly so in between the war years, when there was so much overt Fascist propaganda that very many people were deceived into thinking—or at least almost thinking, in that dim kind of twilight that some people miscall ratiocination—that democratic institutions were very old and quite unequal to modern problems, and ought to give way to something else. And what democracy was asked to give way to, of course, was the most ancient of all institutions—authoritarian government. Therefore I would like us to keep in mind all the while, especially as we are facing some of the most difficult problems that mankind has ever had to face, that ordinary men and women are being called upon today in the most perplexing situations, for the first time in the history of ordinary men and women, to make decisions about things that formerly were left to a small body of extraordinary people.



The next thing for us to remember about it is the background against which democratic institutions are attempting to establish themselves. Not only is democracy very recent, not only was there most inadequate preparation for it, but at the same time, ever since democracy came of age, mankind

has been engulfed in a series of tumults: two world wars, vast migrations; the unsettlements of the early twentieth-century Industrial Revolution superimposed upon the nineteenth. There has been no stability anywhere at all in the whole of this period. And so ordinary men and women were asked to discuss policies of state, and to decide them, even as society itself was being made over before their eyes. So not only is it very young, but the task that it has had to carry out, the problems it was asked to solve, were of a complexity unknown before in the history of mankind.

Up until the present time, up until the Industrial Revolution, I suppose it would be correct to say that the main task of mankind was to make a home for himself in physical nature. A very short time ago there was little furniture in society, institutions were comparatively primitive, means of production were very crude, the relationship between man and physical nature was direct. And for very very many generations the chief task of mankind was to carve for himself, out of what he considered to be a hostile physical nature, something like a stable home. In fact, he was trying to establish society in nature.

Most of his problems, most of the difficulties of this life, most of its anxieties, had direct physical causes. Not only the immortal ones of life and death and disease, but all the other vicissitudes, were seen to be directly a consequence of man's ill adjustment to natural forces. After demonology had given way to religion, he had the consolations of religion and of resignation and of philosophy to console him for these natural vicissitudes. But with the dawn of modern society man had to face his second great task. Whereas the first was to establish society in nature, the second task is to establish the individual in society. Whereas the first was making a home for himself in the cosmos, as it were, he is now faced with the task of trying to find for individual man a home in society. Most of the problems, most of the difficulties, most of the vexations that he has to endure are now social and not natural in their origin. This is an entirely new situation, bringing about new adaptations and new values. Whereas formerly he could try to placate natural forces by all kinds of primitive traditional inheritances, now he saw that what was happening to him which was untoward was a consequence of the aggregation of social actions over which he himself had no individual control. Whereas in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries he had been discovering what he thought was a plan in nature, a design in the natural world—whether that design was teleological or whether it was an emergence, whether rational or irrational,

I am not going to argue here; you must ask Bertrand Russell about that one. But at least he thought he saw a plan, he thought he was discovering some design in natural forces. But in society itself he saw no design. Whereas he thought he had discovered a plan in nature, in society there was no plan, society was complete chaos. Whereas there was some degree of predictability in natural forces, when they came to be understood, there was caprice and uncertainty and unpredictability in social forces.

It is this central fact, obvious though it is, that lies at the background of what so many sociologists call the modern social neurosis; that here is an individual man trying to carve out for himself in society a home, and finding it extremely difficult to do it, because all the time, after he had almost begun to dig the foundations, it was overwhelmed by some social cataclysm or other. Of course you can build a home in a jungle, but it will remain a jungle home; and ever since the Industrial Revolution, ever since the dawn of modern machine society, the individual man (and woman) of that society, the individual citizen, has found himself bombarded by more uncertainties than he has ever known in his history. Modern man is insisting upon social predictability. What does science mean, what does rational thinking mean, what does a systemisation of knowledge mean, except an attempt on the part of the individual to subdue his environment to some kind of predictable purpose?



Therefore the first thing that we have to say about the relationship between socialism and the psychology arising from capitalist society is this—the first value that socialists insist upon is that society must be brought under control in exactly the same way as man has tried to bring natural forces under control. And, just because we have been living with it for a generation or two, do not let us forget the time factor. In no circumstances will the individual citizen of the modern world tolerate a state of affairs in which his own private personal plans are continually upset by insensate social forces. Therefore he insists upon a plan.

Now this insistence upon a plan or central purpose—it does not matter what plan, it does not matter if it is a wrong plan, because what the human mind puts wrong the human mind can put right—means the refusal to abandon human reason. If you make a mistake the mistake can be put right—but for the human mind to refuse to face the task at once dethrones the human spirit from its citadel. There-

fore we must face the task, difficult thought it may be, of trying to introduce some plan into this social chaos.

These considerations, which appear to be so obvious, come home of course with special force to a person like myself who spent so many of his years in his early life living in the salubrious urbanities of South Wales, created by the architects of the Industrial Revolution, and especially when I was surrounded for so many years by thousands and hundreds of thousands of people who were denied a livelihood. Mass unemployment is the first condition which makes modern man revolt against the planlessness of modern society. He will not believe, nor can he be persuaded to believe, that continuous unemployment is a natural condition for a human being to live in. Therefore he insists—and his insistence has produced social convulsions in many parts of the world—that the governments of the day shall make themselves responsible for finding useful work for him.

In the next place, along with this change in the habits and change in the background of individual men and women, there emerges representative government, mass franchise, elected parliaments, so that you have political responsibility accompanied by social irresponsibility. Parliament is made responsible for the government of the nation and for overriding social policies, but private property has all the levers. When anything goes wrong, no matter what, so long as you have an elected chamber the people will blame it. So long as people are given the right to put their cross opposite somebody's name, every three, four or five years, that somebody is going to be the whipping-boy for whatever goes wrong. In fact, democratic parliaments under private property, under capitalism, are the professional public moaners for private economic crimes. So long as parliaments divest themselves of economic power, then democratic institutions are bound to be always the whipping-boys for private enterprise. This happens no matter how experienced the individuals are, no matter how knowledgeable they are.

I have just been reading—if I might interpolate a contemporary note into this survey—a speech delivered by no less a person than Mr. Walter Elliott, who is instructing the Conservatives at Blackpool. He said how he only wished that the building industry could get back to its pre-war efficiency. Well, who is stopping it? The building industry is one of the classic examples of unrestricted private enterprise. There is free entrance into the industry, anybody can become a builder whether he can build or not. He has not got to pass an examination, he is free to go and pick up a trowel or a ladder and do his damndest on your house if you let him,

any time. There is no limitation whatsoever. But you see, nevertheless, here is an ex-Minister of Health—who ought to know what he is talking about—by implication blaming the Government for the fact that private enterprise in the building industry is not efficient. So the fact that we have been so restrained as to leave it in the hands of private enterprise has not exempted us from the blame. And so it is everywhere. You only have to open any of the newspapers any morning, read the leading articles, and you will find always that before you come to the end of it, the Government, which means Parliament, at some time or another will be blamed for something it has done or not done. In fact it is an endless cacophony of blame and derision and nagging day by day.

That is all right in a wholesome democracy like ours. But you must remember that if an elected Parliament goes on denying itself powers of effective economic intervention in order to prevent these evils from occurring, if it goes on continuously divesting itself of powers, then it will undermine parliamentary democracy itself, because people will throw away an institution which is useless to remedy their wrongs. If government by discussion is infertile, then men who think with their blood come on the scene.

So I regard it as an absolute prerequisite for the defence of all the principles of democracy, for the maintenance of the best of the liberal inheritance, that elected governments in the modern world should arm themselves with effective economic powers; because unless they do that, then the people who complain, and properly complain, will cut out the roots of democracy themselves. That is the reason why no democracy in the modern world is safe unless it becomes a socialist democracy. There is no halfway house here at all. It may be that we are moving towards an eclectic society; we are not going to have a monolithic society, we are not going to have a society in which every barber's shop is nationalised. But we must have a society in which the democratic institutions and the elected representatives of the people have their hands on the levers of economic power and where the massive movements of economic affairs are under central direction and control. Unless that happens democracy itself will perish. That is why it is so very important for us to see the argument about public ownership from that particular angle.



It is a fact—and even though we are trying to be as objective as possible in a lecture of this sort, we must not

deny ourselves a few palatable truths—that so far as Toryism has got a philosophy at all, it is anti-democratic, because the British Tories in the House of Commons significantly would rather hand over British steel and coal to Ruhr steel masters and coal masters than hand them over to the House of Commons. In their heart of hearts they believe in denying the realities of economic power to elected governments, and are prepared even to by-pass them and hand over the control of the economic life of our own people to foreign capitalists rather than to native Members of Parliament.

This is not by any means an accident, because property is essentially authoritarian. People do not have large fortunes by consultation; it is only after they have got them that they are prepared to consult! Property in the modern world—and when I am speaking about property I must guard myself and say I mean not personal property but social property, that is to say, the ownership of large aggregations of capital that can only be co-operatively useful but can be privately owned—is essentially authoritarian, and therefore it naturally follows that those who believe in it are prepared to hand it over to another lot of authoritarians, but not over to democrats. That is why, so long as large elements of the economic machine are in the hands of private persons, democracy is not safe. That is why we have always in our thinking to join, or we always should have joined, socialism and democracy as inseparable companions. That is why when we are arguing for public ownership, Madam Chairman, we are not merely arguing it in order that you may produce greater productive efficiency, not merely because you can produce a better balance sheet than can those more acquisitively-minded persons in charge of it, but because the transfer to public ownership of these economic aggregations is absolutely essential for the showing-up of civilised values in modern society. There must be the accession of power, because what is the use of our admitting at one stage that people insist upon having some predictability in their social lives if the very people who say that deny themselves the means by which to bring it about. There is no way in which it is possible for anybody to carry out a plan in the modern state involving stability of employment, involving the proper dispersal of industry, involving all the things that we mean by effective control over economic life, unless the power has passed from the hands of the oligarchs into the hands of democrats.

This may be very obvious, but I perceive in some curious quarters so many misgivings about the relationship between democracy and public ownership, and so many people who

have been doing a lot of curious re-thinking that it is absolutely essential for us to keep our eyes clear on the main destination and not be diverted up the side paths. We have not yet got socialism in Great Britain, and democratic values in Great Britain are not yet safe, and they will not be safe until the principles of an acquisitive society have been supplanted by those of a socialist democratic society.



Having said that, I want to go on to say one other thing about these democratic values that I have mentioned before, but I would like to emphasise it because I think it is sometimes neglected. We have said, until it has become a cliché, that it is one of our purposes to establish full employment. We need not argue why, but there it is, and everybody says it now; even those who belong to the Manchester School of Economics believe in full employment.

They say it is desirable to be able to pick the fruit, even if they are not prepared to plant the trees, but as to its desirability there is no doubt whatsoever, because no one could make themselves commendable, reputable, respectable to democratic opinion if they believed in unemployment. So they have to pay lip service to the principle. But how is it to be brought about? How do you manage to produce full employment in modern society if all the initiative lies in the hands of private persons? There must essentially be a plan, there must be a design, and not only a design but the instruments for the design if the end is to be achieved. Those who will the end must will the means. But having got full employment, having seen to it that all our resources are fully engaged, it has never come home to some people that when that situation has been arrived at a revolution has taken place in human society. When you have large masses of unemployed people, they discharge, for this subject and for our society, the same task as Lecky said the prostitutes did for their virtuous sisters. So long as they are there, you do not have to have a plan; so long as they are there, they can be taken down off the shelf if you have got the impulse to build a new house, or a new office, or a new water main, or anything of that sort. They are always there, exempting you from the burden of moral choice. But when they are all at work and you want to do something more than you were doing, or something other than what you are doing, you can only do it at the expense of something else. That is so obvious, every housewife understands it; she knows very well at the end of the week that if she has so much money and it all goes, and she wants to do something more, if she wants

to buy an extra pair of shoes or send a child to the cinema twice instead of once—God help him!—then she has got to do it at the expense of another member of the family, some other form of expenditure. She must exercise, in her own domain, this principle of selection; but no one seems to have recognised that the same principle applies to society, applies to the national economy. It carries extraordinary implications, and you have it before your very eyes. You had it at the last election; you had it with a political party that promised everything simultaneously. I do not deny that politicians at the hustings are always liable to be demagogic, but nevertheless (Madam Chairman, you have reminded us earlier that dogma is out of place) what we have to consider in such a situation when everybody is fully at work, when all the factors of production are fully engaged and we want to do something more than we are doing, is, at whose expense is it going to be done? In other words, as soon as we reach that situation the ordinary man or woman is called into consultation, and is asked to decide what he himself would put first in the national order of things.

Now, a decision to select between a number of different alternatives, no matter how prosaic those alternatives may be, is a moral choice. Even if you decide to select a thing like a cinema, in place of a house, it is a decision in the order of values. It may be your values are wrong, but you have got to make a decision about values. You have to say what you consider to be most important, what comes first in a socialist community, and a decision as to how to deploy the national resources in that way elevates the authority of principle as against the principle of authority. It is a complete revolution in the history of mankind, because the individual has taken the whole social field for his area of choice, because he is no longer leaving it to blind chance; he is no longer leaving it to somebody else who is wearing the purple; he is no longer leaving it to some unpredictable elements in society, whether you call them the laws of supply and demand or marginal utility. He is being compelled to make a rational and open choice between what he considers to be of first importance. Therefore, when you have the plan, when you have democratic plans, and when you have assumed the power that should accompany political responsibility, when you have reached that situation, the ordinary man and woman is called into the general conference for the purpose of determining what he considers to be the right way in which the national resources should be spent. When that happens, then the ordinary man and woman has reached full stature.

But not until then, not until we have produced a citizenry which is capable not only of selections but of rejections; which says not only who goes at the head of the queue, but who goes right at the bottom of the queue. Any fool can say who goes at the head of it. That is what the Tories are doing at Blackpool; they are all at the head of the queue; but that is not an adult situation, that is not a civilised position, because what you must do is to arrange all your plans in a hierarchical order of values, some above the others. So you are reaching a new kind of authoritarian society, but it is the authority of moral purpose freely undertaken.

That is why we shall not be able to say that we have achieved a maturer civilisation until every man and woman walking about the streets, in their clubs, in their meetings, everywhere, have consciously accepted the alternatives, and the disciplines accompanying them. We have had this for the last five years in some practical shape, not over society as a whole, but over that part of society that, for the moment, the Government has decided should be the area of planning; and it is a hard choice. My Methodist parents used to say, "Have the courage, my son, to say 'No'." Well, it takes a good deal of courage, but we shall have to say 'No' more and more, because only by saying 'No' more and more to many things can you say 'Yes' to the most valuable things.

This moral obligation upon the individual citizen, as I say, is a comparatively new experience in the history of mankind, and it is because it requires an adult citizenship to be able to carry that burden that democracy is failing in many parts of the world. I said at the Labour Party Margate Conference—and you will permit me, if you did not hear about it, to tell you about it—that there was a great deal of self-righteousness among many of us. It is not easy in some parts of the world where life is exceedingly primitive to entrust to all the people the power of democratic selection and then ask them to forego some immediate delights. It is not easy. I reminded our friends at Margate that when we had reached the situation, the economic position, that they are still at, we were hanging children for stealing in London. It is highly doubtful whether the achievements of the Industrial Revolution would have been permitted if the franchise had been universal. It is very doubtful, because a great deal of the capital aggregations that we are at present enjoying are the result of the wages that our fathers went without. When nations like Yugoslavia and others are called upon to build up all the rich furniture of civilisation as we know it, and for the contemporary generation to deny itself until that furniture has been built up, it is not always easy to reconcile

that hard choice with full, free democracy. So that democratic institutions are not universal; they are historically and socially conditioned; they are easier in some places than in others. That is the reason we must always be on our guard, and realise all the while that you cannot maintain a healthy democracy supinely, that you can only do it by continuous education and by continually bringing all the people into as much consultation as possible.



So, Madam Chairman, when I have said that, I have said most of what I want to say this evening but I want to finish by reading a quotation from a man and author for whom I had the utmost admiration, Havelock Ellis. Havelock Ellis wrote an introduction to a book written by a Spaniard called Jose Rodo, an author who was hardly known; he was a native of Buenos Aires. This is what Havelock Ellis wrote in 1918 about Rodo.

"It will be seen that, alike in his criticism of life and his criteria of progress, Rodo remains essentially democratic. He is altogether out of sympathy with the anti-democratic conception of life often associated with Nietzsche's doctrine of Superman. He waves politely aside affirmations that the trying of democracy would mean the defeat of civilisation and, greatly as he admired the genius of Renan he refused to believe that a concern for ideal interests is opposed to a democratic spirit. Such belief, indeed, will be the condemnation of Latin America as much as of Anglo-Saxon America. Rodo accepts democracy on an aristocratic basis. He insists upon the need for selection. Rodo held that it is the duty of the state to render possible the uniform revelation of human superiorities wherever they exist. Democratic equality is the most efficacious instrument of spiritual selection. Democracy alone can conciliate equality at the outset with an inequality at the end, which gives full scope for the best and is most apt to work towards the good of the whole. So considered, democracy becomes a struggle, not to reduce all to the lowest common level, but to raise all towards the highest degree of possible culture. Democracy, in this sense, retains within itself an imprescriptible element of aristocracy which lies in establishing the superiority of the best with the consent of all. But on this basis it becomes essential that the qualities regarded as superior are really the best, and not merely qualities immobilised in a special class or caste and protected by special privileges. The only aristocracy possible on a democratic basis is one of morality and of culture."

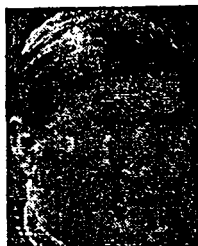
That is why, when eventually the story that we have only just begun to see has unfolded itself, and when democratically-elected institutions have armed themselves with the full panoply of economic power; when all the members of the community share an equal responsibility for determining the use to which social resources are put; when we have begun to create a type of society in which everyone will regard himself as the ruler, and having regarded himself as a ruler, will realise that he can rule only by putting the social service first and himself last, only then can we really achieve the best results of all that we are planning to do.

When I look at the last heading about which I am to speak I would make a little boast; that the most important socialist achievement of this country in the last five years has been the National Health Service. There you have got what a socialist really means by socialism. There is a practical illustration of, "From each according to his capacity; to each according to his need." That is a first fruit, because every socialist believes ultimately in what has been sometimes awkwardly described as a distributive society. He believes, eventually, that the more and more of the world's goods that reach the individual in some other, more civilised way than by the haggling of the market, the more progress that society is making towards a civilised standard.

Therefore, if I am asked to give the criteria of progress, I would say that progress is measured by the extent to which the goods and services that are made available pass into the distributive rather than the commodity sector of the population; and the more and more things that we are able to enjoy without their having to pass through the price system, the more civilised and less acquisitive human society becomes.



Madam Chairman, many others are going to give lectures in this series. I have done my best, at the outset, to set out what my views are, being careful all the time to express myself with sufficient ambiguity where the ice looked very thin. I hope, however, I have said sufficient to be able to stimulate some of you to pursue this thing much further.



Rt. Hon. ANEURIN BEVAN, M.P.,
has been Member of Parliament for Ebbw Vale since
1929 and Minister of Health since 1945.

He has been a member of the Labour
Party National Executive
Committee since
1944.

NOTE.—This pamphlet, like all publications of the Fabian Society, represents not the collective view of the Society but only the view of the individual who prepared it. The responsibility of the Society is limited to approving the publications which it issues as worthy of consideration within the Labour Movement.

January, 1951.

The Fabian Society

11 DARTMOUTH STREET LONDON SW1.

WHAT THE SOCIETY DOES

FOR nearly seventy years the Society has enrolled democratic Socialists who are prepared to discuss Socialist principles and their adaptation to the needs of a changing world.

— Through *meetings, study circles and conferences; pamphlets, books and unpublished reports*; the Society throws out ideas about Socialism and its practical application. In this way the Fabians continue their historical function of *preparing the way for Labour programmes*.

— They believe that—both locally and nationally—there is need, side by side with the political, industrial and trading wings of the Labour movement, for a body which is free from the conduct of every-day affairs, and can therefore *think ahead* and discuss Socialist principles and plans—whether for a local area or the nation or the world as a whole. The purpose is to set people thinking and to work out means of doing things in readiness for the time when the main body of the Movement decides that they need to be done.

— But the Society by no means consists of “intellectuals” or suffers from a swollen-headed feeling that “intellectuals” are the right people to tell the rest of us what to do. *What it has—and wants more of—is a good mixture of the men and women who are doing the work of Socialism in Local Parties, Trade Unions and Co-operatives.*

— *The Society is affiliated to the Labour Party*, and has been since it helped to found the Party fifty years ago. But it puts down no policy resolutions at Party conferences, and drafts no electoral programmes, thus avoiding the risk of becoming a faction and losing the trust of the main body of Labour opinion. Equally, the Society demands no orthodoxy of its members beyond a belief in democratic Socialism. The Society thus becomes a forum for the discussion of the ideas of its members.

— *Particularly does the Society believe that, with a Labour Government, there is need for a body which—trusted but independent—can provide instructive criticism and be one step ahead in thought about longer-term policies and prospects.*

HOW THE SOCIETY IS ORGANISED

MEMBERS who join the Society nationally:—

—receive the published *results of research* and thinking which is organised through the *Home Research Department* and through the *International and Colonial Bureaux*. (Inclusive and separate subscription rates are available.) Some dozen or so pamphlets and booklets have been issued

NATIONALLY in 1950—some prepared by individual members and some by research groups—on subjects which range from the worker-problems in nationalised industry or the Future of Broadcasting in Britain to the economic problems of post-war Italy and “Ferment in Nigeria.” In addition to the studies of problems emerging under Labour administration, longer-term problems are being studied.

—receive also a monthly news-sheet (*Fabian News*) and, about three times a year, *Fabian Journal*—a 40-page booklet with news about the Society and its work, articles and debates on current topics, guides to reading . . . and so on.

—are entitled to attend (usually at special rates) the *meetings, lunches, conferences and dinners*—and *social activities*—planned by the Society's Executive Committee. Each Autumn, for example, there is a series of lectures by eminent thinkers: in Autumn, 1950, under the title “Whither Socialism?—Values in a Changing Civilisation” there has been the beginnings of a move towards a restatement of Socialist principles, and the series was soon fully booked. Week-end Conferences (“Socialist Stocktaking,” “Labour in Nationalised Industry,” etc.) and Summer Schools studying and discussing Socialism are held. Receptions are given for public figures and meetings are arranged on a wide variety of topics (“Industry in a Socialist Society,” “Dilemma in Colonial Policy” are two examples in 1950).

THE Society sets up *local self-governing Fabian Societies* whenever a suitable group is to be found. A special department at head office helps their work, and Regional Committees foster and co-ordinate them. *Over 120 such Societies exist to-day*. Each Society is a live centre of Socialist discussion. Indeed, in these days when the time of Local Labour Party

LOCALLY Ward and Committee meetings has to be so largely devoted to electoral or organisational business, *the local Society often helps to carry the burden of Socialist education and detailed examination of principles and policies*. Meetings and study circles, together with *social activities*, provide a continuous programme with interest for everyone.

—The Societies have excellent relations with the local Labour Party and trade unions. Often, as a body affiliated locally, the Society assists the Party with *research into local problems* on which a Socialist policy is needed, or with special help such as speakers' notes; or by initiating debates and discussions.

—*Research on national problems* is done to assist the parent society. And the collated results of discussions on vital Socialist topics have been forwarded as background material for Party policy planning.

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